

VZCZCXRO6644
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHMS #0368 1061258
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161258Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8088
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0041

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000368

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER IRAQI PM SHARES VIEWS DURING VISIT TO OMAN

REF: MUSCAT 188

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) On April 14, the Ambassador discussed the April 8 visit of Iraq's former premier Iyad Allawi with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi. Per bin Alawi, the Omani government welcomed Allawi to Muscat as part of its efforts to strengthen relations with Iraq, as requested by the Secretary. Bin Alawi noted to the Ambassador that both he and Allawi agreed that reconciliation among rival groups represented the key to addressing the current level of strife and violence in Iraq.

¶2. (C) Toward achieving this goal, Allawi commented that the current government in Baghdad would need to redress the process of de-Baathification by reviewing the profiles of previous party members to determine to what extent they were involved in political, as opposed to criminal, activities. He predicted that after such a review process, most would be eligible to return to government service. Allawi further stated that current Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki posed an obstacle to forging unity among the country's various factions. He viewed Maliki as essentially "reactive" to special interest groups, and claimed that he had failed to seize the initiative to promote his own reconciliation plan. Emphasizing that Iraq needed a leader for "all Iraqis," Allawi asserted that Maliki was "not the one."

¶3. (C) Allawi also raised with bin Alawi the possibility of forming an Arab group to look at formulating "independent" policies in the region. The group, as envisioned by the former Iraqi PM, would serve as a regional sounding board for U.S. policies, with the overall purpose of ensuring that the views of the Arab nations and the U.S. were not in disagreement on important regional initiatives. To this end, Allawi told bin Alawi that Oman's participation in the group would be "particularly helpful."

¶4. (C) Comment: Allawi's trip to Muscat, coming less than two months after the visit of a delegation led by Iraq's Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs (reftel), helped raise the profile of Oman's relationship with Baghdad. In his meetings with bin Alawi and Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Fahad, Allawi only looked to share his own thoughts on how Iraq could move forward from its current state; per bin Alawi, he refrained from asking for assistance from the Omani government. Oman plans to build upon recent discussions with Iraqi visitors by sending one of its officials to Iraq next month. End comment.
GRAPPO